

September 27, 2004

To: California Performance Review Commission

From: Donald R. Parker
Fire Chief
City of Vallejo, California

Subj: Testimony for Sept 27 Hearing:
Reject Recommendation on the California Seismic Safety Commission

I have been a firefighter for over 35 years and have served as a Commissioner on the Seismic Safety Commission for the past 3 years. I am now the Commission's Vice-chair. I strongly urge you to reject the CPR staff recommendation to eliminate the Seismic Safety Commission for the following reasons:

- The Commission focuses on the long-term, broad-view issues such as the interactions of the scientific, emergency response, insurance, and recovery systems dealing with earthquakes. No other State agency does this or is equipped to undertake this unique and critical responsibility.
- The Seismic Safety Commission, as an independent review body, serves as the only public sounding board and an objective center of expertise for the State's overall response to earthquakes.
- The Commissioners are Governor-selected, world-class experts in the fields of geology, seismology, engineering, and emergency preparedness. By virtue of their presence on the Commission, they effectively donate their technical services, the economic and financial value of which is enormous.
- The Commission provides its services using nominal, non-General Fund resources (for 2004-05, its annual operating budget is only \$884,000). Hence, elimination of the Commission would yield very limited statewide savings while increasing California's exposure to potentially catastrophic injuries, property damages and economic losses due to the forfeiture of coordinated and sound seismic safety strategies and planning.
- The Commission provides a unique, invaluable service and there is no compelling policy-based or fiscal justification in the CPR report to support the recommendation for elimination.

Finally, the CPR report states that many boards and commissions lack “accountability.” This is most definitely not true of the Seismic Safety Commission. The Commission is directly accountable to the Governor and the Legislature for all its work products and policy recommendations. For example, as an indicator of the respect the Commission’s recommendations receive from the Administration and Legislature, all of the bills sponsored by the Commission in 2004 were signed into law.

Even administratively, the Commission is accountable. It fully adheres to the controls set by the Department of Finance, the Department of General Services, and the Department of Insurance, which manages the fund that supports the Commission’s operating budget. The Commission provides local government and the public with an opportunity to comment on, and participate in, the development of seismic safety policy for the state. This concept fits within the Governor’s goal of establishing a more efficient and useful California government.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before the Commission today.

Sincerely,

/s/

Donald Parker
Fire Chief
City of Vallejo